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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

(BNØ49)

Date: June 27, 1977

Subject: Church-State Relations

Participants: Monsignor Kevin Mullen - Papal Nunciatura
Yvonne Thayer - POL

Place: Reed/Thayer Residence

Fr. Mullen said that the last active working priest of the Charles de Foucauld Order had disappeared after having apparently been abducted in April. (The four other Foucauld working priests had all previously either been arrested, disappeared or left the country, such as in the case of Irish priest Patrick Rice.) The recent victim could have been taken for assisting Argentines to leave the country, Mullen said, adding that he and others had also tried to help threatened Argentines leave the country, usually via overland routes to neighboring countries.

Fr. Mullen also said, very confidentially, that the Church would probably refrain from new, public challenges to GOA on disappearances and human rights practices so as not to jeopardize Videla's hold on the government. Videla is seen as preferable to a possibly more hardline and brutal right-wing replacement. Mullen said the Church believes the right is to try to provoke confrontations between the Church and Videla to effect his fall and subsequent replacement by hardline elements, a trap which the Church had no intention of falling into. The Church would continue active, personal behind-the-scenes lobbying on human rights cases, Mullen said.

Mullen noted that the Bishops Conference document had not caused a great stir nor had it brought significant beneficial results.

As for human rights, Mullen commented that the Church and the U.S. were the only two groups championing human rights in general. He expressed disdain that European and other countries were only interested insofar as their own citizens were affected.

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

(X) Release () Excise () Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: () In Part (X) In Full

() Classify as () Extend as () Downgrade to

Date Declassify on Reason

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